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MISCELLANEOUS. No. 1 (1917).

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING THE

PROPOSED RELEASE OF CIVILIANS INTERNED IN THE BRITISH AND GERMAN EMPIRES.

[In continuation of "Miscellaneous, No. 35 (1916)": Cd. 8352.]

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
January 1917.*

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Further Correspondence respecting the Proposed Release of Civilians Interned in the British and German Empires.

[In continuation of "Miscellaneous, No. 35 (1916)": Cd. 8352.]

No. 1.

*Mr. Page, United States Ambassador at London, to Viscount Grey.—
(Received October 30.)*

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit herewith enclosed a copy of a letter he has received from the Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, dated the 20th instant, referring to Lord Grey's note of the 19th September,* and enclosing a copy of a *note verbale* from the German Government respecting the release of British and German civilian prisoners of war.

American Embassy, London, October 28, 1916.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

Mr. Grew to Mr. Page.

THE American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin presents his compliments to the Ambassador at London, and with reference to Mr. Laughlin's letter of the 19th ultimo, enclosing a copy of a note of the same date from the Foreign Office, respecting the release of British and German civilian prisoners of war, has the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a note, dated the 16th instant, from the Imperial Foreign Office, relating to the same subject.

American Embassy, Berlin, October 20, 1916.

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

Note verbale.

(Translation.)

THE Foreign Office have the honour to inform the United States Embassy as follows, with reference to their note of the 25th ultimo, relative to the release of German and British civilian prisoners:—

The German Government keenly regret from the point of view of humanity that the British Government have not seen their way to acquiesce in the German proposal for the release of all civilian prisoners, despite the fact that by renouncing the right of enrolling these men in the army the sole object of their detention would disappear. They likewise regret that the British Government have not at least agreed to the exchange of all civilian prisoners above the age of 45 years without exception. To avoid wrecking the agreement, however, they will not withhold their consent to an exchange on the lines of the proposal put forward by the British Government.

* See "Miscellaneous, No. 35 (1916)," No. 9.

In accordance with this proposal, German civilians above the age of 45 interned in the British Empire, including the British colonies and possessions, and British civilians above the age of 45 interned in Germany, together with such civilian prisoners on both sides who, not yet being 45 years of age, shall from time to time reach that age limit, are to be released. Both parties shall be free, however, to retain on military grounds not more than twenty persons who would otherwise be entitled to release. Neither Government shall have the right to demand the repatriation of persons who do not wish to leave the country. Costs of repatriation are to be borne by the repatriated persons, or by the State to which they belong. The repatriation of Germans from the British overseas possessions shall be carried out as rapidly as the circumstances permit. Retired military and naval officers not in receipt of pay and officers and members of the crews of British and German mercantile vessels are to be regarded as ordinary civilian prisoners within the meaning of the agreement.

The German Government take for granted, moreover, that the agreement in question applies to civilians on either side who may in the further course of the war fall into enemy hands.

With respect to the method of putting this agreement into execution, the German Government propose that the exchange of the civilian prisoners concerned who are in Germany and Great Britain should, if possible, be carried out simultaneously, and that for this purpose they should be repatriated in three groups of approximately equal numbers. The names of those persons who, in pursuance of the above-mentioned exception, are detained in one or other of the two countries, are to be communicated to the Government of the other country. The German Government expect, moreover, as was already stated in their note of the 31st August, that those persons who have been retained in England in spite of being entitled to release under the earlier agreements, shall be included in the first party of repatriated prisoners.

Berlin, October 16, 1916.

No. 2.

Viscount Grey to Mr. Page.

THE Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, and has the honour to refer to his Excellency's notes of the 20th* and 28th October, in regard to the proposed exchange of British and German interned civilians over 45 years of age.

His Majesty's Government consider that an agreement has now been concluded between the respective Governments for the repatriation of the civilians in question who are now interned in Germany and the British Empire respectively, upon the conditions mentioned in Viscount Grey's note of the 19th September last. They will therefore take steps to carry it out promptly.

They are prepared to include in the first party, as far as may be practicable, German civilians alleged to be entitled to repatriation under previous agreements.

They also agree that the names of the twenty persons to be detained on each side shall be reciprocally communicated as soon as possible.

His Majesty's Government have no objection to raise to the proposal of the German Government that the exchange of the persons coming within the scope of the agreement, who are in the United Kingdom and Germany, should be carried out as simultaneously as possible, but the question whether the exchange can be effected in three groups must depend on practical considerations such as the nature of the transport available. It will probably be necessary for His Majesty's Government to charter a vessel to convey the prisoners of war to and from Holland.

As soon as His Majesty's Government have ascertained how many German civilians can be included in the first party, they will inform the German Government, in order that a proportionate number of British civilians may be ready to embark at the Netherlands port at which the German party will arrive.

It is of course assumed, and His Majesty's Government will act on the assumption, that the masters and crews of fishing vessels will benefit by the agreement, as well as the officers and crews of all merchant vessels engaged in commerce.

* See "Miscellaneous No. 35 (1916)," No. 11.

In case of doubt, His Majesty's Government desire to stipulate that the fact that retired naval and military officers not in receipt of pay are in the receipt of pensions, shall not exclude them from the benefits of the agreement.

His Majesty's Government note that the German Government consider that the agreement should apply to civilians on each side who come into hostile hands in the subsequent course of the war.

As this is an entirely new proposal, His Majesty's Government must reserve this matter for future consideration.

His Majesty's Government would suggest that a definite date should be agreed on as the date for the coming into force of this agreement, and that the date of Mr. Page's note replying to this note should be taken as the date.

It is requested that the above may be communicated by telegram to the United States Ambassador at Berlin for the information of the German Government.

Foreign Office, December 6, 1916.

No. 3.

Mr. Page to Mr. Balfour.

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Viscount Grey's note of the 6th instant, concerning the exchange of civilian prisoners of war over 45 years of age, has the honour to quote the following telegram, dated the 20th instant, from the Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin :—

"Note of Foreign Office just received, dated 19th, states in substance German Government concurs with British Government in assuming conclusion of agreement relating to release of male civilians over 45 on both sides. Germany has noted declarations of British Government transmitted by *note verbale* of Berlin Embassy of 9th, and agrees to proposals contained therein. Germany expects further that Germans interned in Mediterranean possessions of Great Britain will be repatriated at same time as German civilians in Great Britain, or in immediate succession to them, and that the release of German civilians over 45 detained in other British territory will be expedited as much as possible."

London, December 22, 1916.

No. 4.

Mr. Page to Mr. Balfour.

THE American Ambassador presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to enclose herewith a copy of a communication, dated the 27th ultimo, from the Ambassador at Berlin, together with a copy of the *note verbale* from the German Government upon which was based the telegram communicated in Mr. Page's note of the 22nd ultimo concerning the exchange of civilian prisoners of war.

American Embassy, London, January 2, 1917.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

THE American Ambassador in Berlin presents his compliments to the Ambassador at London, and, with reference to Mr. Grew's telegram of the 20th instant and to previous correspondence relative to the proposed agreement between the British and German Governments regarding the exchange of civilian prisoners, has the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a *note verbale*, dated the 19th instant, from the Imperial Foreign Office, the original text upon which Mr. Grew's telegram was based.

Berlin, December 27, 1916.

Enclosure 2 in No. 4.

Note verbale.

(Translation.)

THE Foreign Office have the honour to reply as follows to the note from the United States Embassy of the 9th instant with regard to the release of German and British interned civilians.

The German Government agree with the view of the British Government that the agreement for the release of the male civilians of the two nationalities over 45 years of age is to be regarded as concluded. The German Government have taken note of the declarations of the British Government communicated in the *note verbale* above referred to, and agree to the proposals contained therein. They further expect that the Germans over 45 interned in the British Possessions in the Mediterranean will be sent home at the same time as those interned in Great Britain, or as nearly so as possible, and that the German civilians over 45 interned in the remaining British Possessions will be repatriated with all possible speed.

The Foreign Office request the Embassy to communicate the above to the British Government immediately, and to be good enough to state the date of the note of the American Embassy in London containing this communication.

Berlin, December 19, 1916.

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